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ABSTRACT

There is an important relationship between history and geography that needs greater emphasis in the social studies curriculum. By emphasizing the temporal and spatial relationships in geography and history, geographers can help develop curriculum that focuses upon the fundamental themes in geography, the relationship of the themes to the study of history, and the cognitive skills important for both disciplines. The integration of history and geography is carried out currently at the elementary level, but secondary level teachers need to strive harder to incorporate this concept into their teaching. Secondary level history textbooks by focusing little attention to geographic concepts do very little to support integration. Geographic literacy is necessary in the teaching and learning of history and needs to be emphasized in the curriculum. (AS)

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Geography and History in the Curriculum: Relationships Between Space and Time

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Geography and History in the Curriculum: Relationships Between Space and Time

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Geography and History in the Curriculum: Relationships Between Space and Time

It is a pleasure to be in Los Angeles this morning. The **LOCATION** of Los Angeles along with the human and physical attributes of **PLACE** provides it with an increasingly important role in the **MOVEMENT** of people, products and ideas across the increasingly important Pacific Rim **REGION.** Hopefully everyone recognized the not so hidden nuances imbedded in that statement. It contains four of the five fundamental themes from *Guidelines for Geographic Education:* **LOCATION, PLACE, MOVEMENT, and REGION.**[1]

What about the fifth theme, that of **RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN PLACES?** In order to examine that theme, we need to first examine the human landscape that has developed here in Los Angeles, as well as within the State of California. These relationships within places are the result of people interacting with the environment, and a large segment of that interaction is closely related to history. Relationships within places demonstrate how geography and history in a place span both **space** and **time.** These temporal and spatial relationships are the central focus of the comments I will make this morning.

I was tempted to talk about geographic literacy this morning and the extent to which students in the United States lack common knowledge and basic geographic awareness. However, all of you have undoubtedly heard enough about what college students or K-12 students do not know about the world. In addition, we need not focus entirely upon elementary and secondary students when talking about geographic literacy. A recent report of the international airline market that connects these widely separated places of the Pacific Rim is also revealing regarding geographic literacy. We know that several of our U.S. flagship companies compete in that market. A glaring example of geographic **illiteracy** recently highlighted an elaborate international marketing program planned by one of the major U.S. air carriers for a group of Japanese business executives. What went wrong? Well, the Japanese had to point out that the colorful, attractive advertisement showing a map of Japan, an island nation, had failed to include the country's northernmost island.[2]

However, our topic today is the relationship between history and geography, a topic in which illiteracy about both space and time become apparent. On President's Day 1988 I was perplexed by the following question. George Washington once threw a dollar across: a) the Potomac River; b) the Delaware River; c) the Rappahannock River?[3] What are the historical and geographic implications of these three options?

One must ask: "When" was George at each of those rivers, "Where" along the river course was he; and "Why was he there?" Well, knowing about the physical characteristics of the three rivers and the period of George's life spent along the banks of each is a large order. What would you have answered?

I guessed answer c, the Rappahannhock; but only after considering to some large extent the economic vernacular of the question. Was it a paper dollar or a dollar in change? Without doubt, the easiest toss would be a dollar adjusted to inflation in 1988. The silver dollar and the Susan B. Anthony dollar are both economic, and I might add

cultural, artifacts to students today. An inflation adjusted dollar from George Washington's childhood era has so little value that it would require only the mental transformation of a concept across the river. As a collector's item, it would be valued at a substantial amount.

Along that same eastern rim of the continent as Fredricksburg and Ferry Farm, the location of George Washington's childhood home and perhaps the dollar-sized rock throwing feat, there was another episode that revealed the inseparable relationship between geography and history. It was the settlement of Jamestown in 1607. Captain John Smith in his introduction to *The Fifth Booke in the Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) stated the following, paraphrased from the Elizabethan English:

> I am going to write a history. Before beginning the history I shall take a look at the geography, for as geography without history is like a carcass without motion, so history without geography, wandreth as a vagrant spirit without a certain habitation.[4]

Geography and history are both currently receiving considerable attention on the curriculum agenda. On the curriculum review side, major professional organizations, leading scholars, and the mass media all make various claims that the inadequate treatment of these basic subjects has seriously undermined general education as well as education for responsible citizenship in the United States. Numerous recent manuscripts in the literature have presented analyses of the situation and the influence it is having on the curriculum materials development process.[5] In reading about organizations addressing these questions, I am astonished by the new vocabulary necessary to comprehend the extent of interest. Some examples of terminology I encountered are: NGS, AAG, NCGE, GENIP, OAH, AHA, NCSS, and HTA.[6] These are all either acronyms or abbreviations for organizations involved in the geography/history movement.

Despite the diversity of terminology that accompanies concerns regarding geography and history, there is considerable agreement regarding the central message. That message clearly presents the case that together, the two subjects, geography and history, provide learners with basic and essential knowledge of place and time. Geography and history provide the context for studying where and when activities occurred. Together, they enable students to develop perspectives about the behaviors of persons and groups of people from both the past and present, ranging from the local community to the world at large.

With that in mind, it seems there are four major tasks that stand before geographers actively engaged in the social studies. First, we must help build attention into the curricula for a clear focus upon the five main themes of geography—**location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and region.** My own research on the history of geographic education,[7] as well as the observations of other geographers[8], clearly indicates that geography has made the best progress in the school curriculum when it has recognized and accepted mainstream themes with confidence and pursued them with imagination and vigor. The five fundamental themes presented in the *Guidelines for*

Geographic Education make it possible for geography to progress and to complement history in so doing.

Second, geographers must help develop curricula that use the main themes of geography to illuminate for students and to help them understand the significant events and developments in history. When presented as separate subjects of study, the degree to which geography and history complement one another must be identified in distinct ways for the students. The application of the fundamental themes in geography to the era of westward expansion in United States history is an excellent opportunity to show the relationships between the subjects. An excellent volume entitled *Geographic Perspectives on American Westward Expansion* that shows these relationships has been published here in California.[9]

Third, geographers must assist in developing curricula that promotes literacy in geography and history through the comprehension and applications of these subjects. That is important for understanding both history and geography, their relationships to each other, and to explanation and inquiry in general. It is essential to recognize that geographic literacy involves going beyond knowledge of locations[10] and historical literacy involves going beyond knowledge of dates.[11] Literacy in both subjects includes the ability to integrate geographic with historic knowledge in order to formulate questions and to seek meaningful explanations.

Fourth, geographers must assist in developing curricula that result in cognitive skills for dealing with history and geography. A term used to classify major skills perceived to fall within the realm of geography is "being maperate," or locating places on maps.[12] Skills in geography extend far beyond those often perceived as significant (coloring or tracing maps). The processing of information and ideas visually from geography and history using maps and charts shows how the subjects merge and complement each other through time and space. Geographic skills proposed in the *Guidelines for Geographic Education* assist students in making and defending statements based upon evidence, and presenting information in both its temporal and spatial form.

Two recent publications have provided considerable attention to geography and history. The first is *The Shaping of America: A Geographic Perspective on 500 Years of History* by Geographer Donald Meinig.[13] This volume provides considerable grist for the curricular process centering upon geography and history, their relationships, and how each subject contributes to explanation. *What Do Our Seventeen-Year-Olds Know?* by Ravitch and Finn is the second publication.[14] The authors state that "the study of history at every grade level should incorporate the study of geography...." This book goes on to build the case that "geographic literacy enables students to understand how people and the places they inhabit influence each other." The two publications serve as academic endorsements that history and geography should, in fact must, function together in a meaningful way in the curriculum.

The research by Meinig and Ravitch and Finn leads me to consider how geography and history may be prepared as a curriculum delight tempting the intellectual palates of students. It seems that history and geography in the curriculum may be designed as a layer

cake with each layer containing swirls of history and geography that provide a three dimensional blending, merging, and highlighting of each of the subjects. In slicing that layer cake in any direction for any size or shape of the curriculum, a slice would never be without some combination of history and geography. Both subjects would provide the dominent flavorings, depending upon where in the swirl the unit of study was taking place. In some layers of the cake, geography would be the focus, but never without history. In other layers history would be the focus, but never without those essential ingredients of geography necessary for explanation.

Isn't this already the case? Aren't geography and history already integrated in the materials we use in the social studies classroom? Yes, this is true to a degree in the elementary curriculum. However, a different situation is present at the secondary level. I base that conclusion upon my own research that entailed analyzing United States history textbooks that were being used in either the eighth or eleventh grades across the United States. The purpose of my research was to determine if the textbooks presented geographic facts, ideas, processes and skills important to the comprehension and understanding of historical content. I can report that in most cases geography and history were not integrated. At the eighth and eleventh grade levels, U.S. history textbooks tended to present less than an acceptable treatment of the ways in which geography helps explain historical events and their underlying developments. Of the 22 U. S. History textbooks for the eighth grade, only five were rated as acceptable. Of the 17 eleventh grade U.S. History textbooks, only three were rated as acceptable in their treatment of geography within the study of history.[15] That segment of the curricular cake represented by U.S. History textbooks yielded slice after slice with almost total disregard for the role of geography in the study of history.

My conclusion! There was little focus upon using geography to help set the stage upon which the drama of history has been played. Geographic considerations important to analysis and explanation in history were reduced to a minimal level or left out altogether. What do curriculum reformers focusing upon geography and its relationship to history in the curriculum want? First, an extension of geography into all levels of the curriculum. They want geographical concepts developed. They want less memorization, and more emphasis upon developing a clear understanding of ideas. They want more maps in classrooms and better maps in textbooks.

Do these sound like suggestions from 1988? Yes they do; but, they are not! These suggestions are from 1845. And one of the individuals to lead that reform movement was John Sweet – Superintendent of School in California in 1864.[16] That bit of history does reveal something about the contemporary reform movements in the curriculum, especially in relationship to geography. We have been working at it for a long time, much has been accomplished, but much more awaits our attention.

How should we go about correcting a similar situation in 1988 and into the next century? First, from the geographic perspective, it is important to recognize the extent to which the five fundamental themes of geography complement the study of history. **Location** tells us where historical events occurred. **Place** tells us about the human and physical

characteristics of a locale that may have affected or influenced the outcomes of historical events. **Relationships within places** enable us to examine how historical events were played out over time at a particular place or between places. **Movement** enables us to examine and better understand how historical events through time were also linked through space or from place to place. Finally, the **region** with its mosaic of characteristics holds the drama of the human dimension through time. It enables us to examine how sequent occupance, population, economic advantages of a particular environment for the residents all contributed to making a part of the earth's surface what it is today: a corn belt, a French cultural region, with its common characteristics that indeed make it a region in the geographic sense, cohesive as a result of the historic fabric that helps tie the region together.

My travel to Los Angeles permitted me to observe the landscape across this vast continent, and reflect upon historian W. P. Webb's book, *The Great Plains.*[17] It is an excellent example of how different groups of people responded to the same geography at different periods of time. The pre-Columbian Plains Indians, the Sixteenth Century Spanish, the cattle ranchers of the 1840's and the wheat farmer of the 1880's each developed a close human-environment relationship with the region. They experimented with different technologies in using the Great Plains. During each historical period a new cultural group saw different possibilities in the Great Plains environment. Those different perceptions were linked to changing technology, each group's cultural background, and the constantly unfolding saga of history that tied the Great Plains to the larger panorama of the Westward Movement.

James Michener is noted for his award winning novels, most of them providing the reader with an important sense of both geography and history. It is encouraging to know that Mr. Michener, former social studies teacher and lecturer in education at Harvard, cites geography and history as interlocking disciplines providing essential information about the great complexity of the earth and its peoples through time.[18]

How do the fundamental themes of geography link to the major elements of history in the curriculum? What are the interlocking attributes that James Michener recognizes? In order to identify the major elements of history, it seems only appropriate to turn to the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.*[19] Since those of you here this morning are discussing the *Framework* and its effects upon curriculum, I will briefly describe how the interlocking threads of geography and history emerge within the six historical literacy elements of the *Framework.*

1. To understand the meaning of time and chronology: Chronology is the arrangement of events in time. Events occur at **locations.** To think in historical terms, one begins by considering time and locations for single events. This focus extends to consider other events happening at the same time and in other locations, and the relationship between prior events and those currently being examined. Historical literacy requires the ability to define events in terms of time and location. The consideration of relationships **within** and **across** different periods of time and the locations where events occurred links history and geography together. One of the examples I prefer is the extent to which the

process of revolution against colonial countries spread to other parts of the Americas in the fifty years following the American revolution, thus linking events and locations.

2. To Analyze Cause and Effect: Historical understanding requires knowing not only what has happened, but why it happened and what the consequences have been. As such, history involves the examination of conditions and consequences, which are often multiple. Among these multiple factors, the **physical** and **human** characteristics of **place** are often important considerations in investigating and explaining cause/effect relationships. Especially when there is a correlation between a significant historical event, or events, and the environment as used or perceived by people, the nature of that correlation should be analyzed. A favorite example of mine is the Great Plains. The sequent land use patterns by different groups of people, the bankruptcy era of the Dust Bowl, and the more recent mountains of surplus grain and abandoned center pivot irrigation fields all present a perspective upon cause/effect relationships involving history and geography.

3. To Understand Reasons for Continuity and Change: The study of history involves examining why people and their societies either change or stay essentially the same. Basic questions regarding change and stability from change are associated with **relationships between people and the environment** at a **place.** Continuity and change are also related to the occurrence of or lack of **movement** between places. The lack of movement of people, ideas, and products usually results in little or no change at a place. In charting and explaining the trends of continuity and change, the examination of before and after, the long term relationships between people and their environment as reflected in the landscape become an important aspect of historical interpretation. The example I like entails the changes resulting from the immigration of people to the Americas and the migrations within the North American continent that represent significant historical eras which have left their indelible marks upon the landscape. The rectangular land survey as part of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, on the one hand, introduced considerable continuity to the political, economic, and transportation geography of the region, as exemplified in the township government, the orientation of primary and secondary highways, and the settlement pattern that developed. On the other hand, it permitted changes as the social fabric of the region changed. One example has been the consolidation of governmental and service units, including school districts.

4. To Recognize History as a Common Memory, with Political Implications: One of the most important goals of studying the history of one's own country is the development of a shared cultural heritage. The ideals and traditions that make up the socio/cultural baggage of a nation provide both the tightly and loosely knit fabrics of common experience. A common memory, based upon the knowledge of the history of one's society or country, is a means for social cohesion and continuity. We realize the common memory includes the symbols, persons, and events of our nation, but it also entails knowing about **places.** Being literate about one's culture is an acceptable and essential goal for both history and geography. What constitutes that literacy is subject to both subjective and objective debate. James Marran has reviewed E. D. Hirsch's 65 page list of words and phrases in *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*[20] and identified a substantial number of terms that are geographic.[21] When I reflect upon my

own cultural literacy, the attachment to the geographic elements of my childhood home in Eastern Washington State is complemented by the historical knowledge that it was once called Robber's Roost. Let me assure you that, for preservation of character, it is a **place** that has undergone considerable changes since that time. A common memory is more aptly demonstrated by the following quotation from a fifteen year old student in Kalamazoo, Michigan, writing for an international publication:

> The thrill we feel when the Star Spangled Banner is played is simply a symbol of our loyalties to this new country—a young two hundred and ten years old. Since I have been raised in the United States, I know that my views are magnified through "rose-colored" glasses. The Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Desk Dictionary* describes home as: "a place natural or dear because of personal relationships or feelings of comfort and security," yet there is something else stirring within me when someone mentions the word "home."[22]

5. To Develop a Keen Sense of Historical Empathy: One develops historic empathy by associating mentally with individuals living during other times at a **place** or in different **places.** The opportunity to develop a sense for how individuals felt about the events and challenges of their era includes how those individuals felt about the land, the vegetation, and the natural resources. It also includes the migrations of people, and the attachments they maintained directly or perceptually with the environments of earlier experiences. Empathy entails considering the time, the people, the place and the condition, or the multiples of these four. What did the people see when they viewed the landscape, and how were those views affected by their past experiences?

6. To Understand the Importance of Religion, Philosophy and Other Major Belief Systems in History: Cultural conflict and continuity have an important role in historical explanation. The **human characteristics of place** and the **movement** of ideas are fundamental themes from geography that help explain conflict and continuity. In some places it was the separation of peoples by geographic barriers (mountains, deserts, or waters) that permitted continuity with little outside contact. In other places it was the linkage, often across waters or along a mountain front, that brought groups into contact. Both history and geography are essential to understanding the degree to which belief systems have affected the ways that different groups have used the earth and its resources. The influence of religion upon agricultural resources is but one example. The fact that Buddhists are predominantly vegetarian and Hindus do not eat beef will greatly influence how the land is viewed and used.

Geography and history are inseparably linked by virtue of their major concern—perspectives, information, concepts, and skills essential to viewing and understanding historical developments and events. Competence in the geographic underpinnings and information necessary for historical learning is essential to sound teaching and learning of history in general, and American history in particular. Geography and history are both unique and significant to the learning experience, as expressed in the words of Captain John Smith:

> I am going to write a history. Before beginning the history I shall take a look at the geography, for as geography without history is like a carcass without motion, so history without geography, wandreth as a vagrant spirit without a certain habitation.[23]

Thank You.

Notes

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